

FORUM: REVIEWS AND COMMENTS

KARDULIAS, P. N. (ed.): *The Ecology of Pastoralism*. XVIII and 291 pp., 28 figs. and 4 tables. University Press of Colorado, Boulder 2015, US \$ 70

The title of the edited volume evokes substantial expectations. Do we find a new approach to the interlinkages between environment, economy and society from an ecological perspective regarding pastoral practices in the world? In his brief introduction the editor states that '... in some regions, pastoral people represent a traditional form of life that is rapidly disappearing under pressure from the modern world... At the same time, many countries present the image of the traditional herder as a unifying cultural theme, part of a national identity.' (p. 3). Given this wide spectrum which has been dealt with in numerous articles and books in recent decades, the particular approach here is devoted to a longer historical perspective of adaptation and change. It seems to be conventional wisdom that '... pastoral people must have an intimate knowledge not only of the environment where their herds graze at any particular time but also of the prevailing conditions in those other areas to which they move in search of additional pastures.' (p. 6). The selection of case studies appears to be mainly driven by random. Five contributors situated their investigation in Asia who work on a variety of issues about nomads in the Republic of Kazakhstan (Claudia Chang), the ecology of Inner Asian pastoralism in general (Nikolay Kradin), agro-pastoralism and transhumance in Hunza (Homayun Sidky), followed by two archaeological studies from Mongolia (Erik Johannesson) and Chorasnia (Michelle Cleary) which are looking far back into the Bronze and Iron Age pastoralism. One study about the Fulbe pastoralists in the Chad basin (Mark Moritz) represents the African continent as well as one on Navajo pastoral land use (Lawrence Kuznar) for the Americas before three case studies are devoted to Northern Europe: two addressing Irish dairy farmers (Mark Shutes) followed by an ethno-archaeological study on a Greek island (Nick Kardulias). A concluding chapter (Thomas Hall) leaves many questions open about the combination of cases and the main argument of the volume. Somehow a long historical perspective is sought by adhering to the archaic form of pastoral practices and emphasising the 'traditional'. The dan-

ger in this approach could be that first of all the categories are not clear. Often the binary distinction between traditional and modern containers might imply a rather limited knowledge about the history of pastoral practices in a given area. The tradition container functions as a collecting device for all aspects that are little known or understood and provides interpretations that are lacking evidence. A second field of ambiguity is terminological vagueness when it comes to distinguishing nomadism, pastoralism and transhumance. The chapter contributed by Homayun Sidky will serve as an exemplification. He provides a distinction between agro-pastoralism and transhumance in Hunza that is based on customised ideas about transhumance. If one would go back to the origins of the transhumance debate as a pastoral practice of the circum-Mediterranean mountain areas then it would become very clear that what he describes as transhumance would resemble the pastoral practice of combined mountain agriculture (see Ehlers and Kreutzmann 2000: 14-19) where farmers send their herds with family members seasonally in summers to natural high pastures in the mountains. Thus, strong links between forage, fodder production and manure collection are created. This is what exactly happened in the Hunza case. Forms of transhumance are found in the Karakoram Mountains as well; e.g. where Gujur pastoralists function as shepherds for resident farmers, thus resembling the mentioned practices from the Mediterranean. In addition he alleges a strong relationship between rituals and resource utilisation in Hunza. The pure spheres of the fairies (pari) in high pastures are mentioned to support his argument of human response to ecological and societal frame conditions. The case of the Hunzukuts is especially interesting as different communities come under this term: Shina speakers, Burusho, and Wakhi who all have different worldviews. His description is limited to the representation of the Burusho belief systems, while the Wakhi practice is just the opposite. Where Burusho do not permit women to work in the high pastures due to purity considerations, Wakhi send mainly women for doing the hard work. Incidentally, both communities share in some places the same pastoral settlements in the high mountains (see map in Ehlers and Kreutzmann 2000, p. 98). It is rightly stated that these practices have been strongly modified in re-

cent years – which he resembles with the 1970s – in fact, nowadays in most of the Burusho high pasture settlements in Central Hunza we find only a single or two shepherds with small herds. As the focus of the book is more backwards and emphasises a historical perspective it would have been helpful to acknowledge recent archival research and local historiographies that provide evidence of pastoral practices in Hunza. The topic of the ecology of pastoralism needs further attention, especially in times when pasture degradation and climate change provide pretexts for administrators to settle mobile herders in great style as is nowadays taking place in China, or where historical studies could be helpful to explain the nexus of autocratic rule and pastoral practices practice in challenging environments, or where adaptive strategies are investigated for a sustainable use of pastoral resources in savannahs and steppes, or where pastoralists are driven out by neo-liberal players in search for wealth in remote regions. Further research seems to be required for understanding the spectrum of variations in pastoral practices and their linkages to ecology.

HERMANN KREUTZMANN

References

- EHLERS, E. and KREUTZMANN, H. (eds.) (2000): High mountain pastoralism in Northern Pakistan. Stuttgart.